

# Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI)

## *Frequently Asked Questions about UICs*

**April 2017**

**Last Updated: 4/4/2017**

**Questions:**

Email: [cepi@michigan.gov](mailto:cepi@michigan.gov)

Phone: 517-335-0505 x3



## **Contents**

Introduction .....	3
Help and Resources .....	3
Frequently Asked Questions .....	3
1. I have a problem. How do I get help? .....	3
2. What is a UIC? Why is it important? .....	3
3. How do I get UICs for our students? .....	3
4. Why would I need to submit a UIC to get a UIC? .....	4
5. What documents do I need to see to accurately submit a UIC request for a new student? .....	4
6. What purpose does the Multiple Birth Order field serve? .....	4
7. How long does it take to get a UIC? .....	5
8. Resolution? Please explain. ....	5
9. What information should I provide for resolutions? .....	6
10. Is the request process different for Institutions of Higher Education? .....	7
11. How do I learn more about UICs? .....	7
12. What's the difference between UIC linking and splitting student records? .....	7
13. I want to link UICs. Which record should be the primary UIC? .....	8
14. A student's personal core information is wrong. What should I do? .....	8
15. I just generated a new UIC with the wrong information. How do I fix it? .....	9
16. If in doubt, create a new UIC. Right? .....	9
17. I created a second UIC for a student by mistake. Can you delete it, please? ..	9
18. I need a UIC for a twin. How do I create one? .....	9
19. What now? Somebody took our student's UIC to report for a collection. ....	9
20. Why does the Request for UIC Collection upload process take so long? .....	10
21. I'm a researcher and I would like to study Michigan students. Can I get access to deidentified student data? .....	10
22. I work for a law enforcement agency and I believe CEPI has access to student information that would assist in an ongoing criminal investigation. Who should I speak to? .....	10

## **Introduction**

This manual presents frequently asked questions about Unique Identification Codes (UICs). CEPI staff recognize school administrators will have different levels of experience with CEPI applications, and UICs represent yet another specialized topic. The intention here is to convey basic information and advice for handling UICs.

## **Help and Resources**

If you have questions not covered by this manual and our other posted support material, please contact our customer support team at [cepi@michigan.gov](mailto:cepi@michigan.gov). Email allows us to better research and respond to your questions, but if email is not an option, you can call us at 517-335-0505 x3.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. I have a problem. How do I get help?**

First, briefly write down the problem for your records. What was your goal? What action did you take? When did you try? What result are you seeing?

Second, check CEPI's web pages to look for available information. This may take time but it is possible to find useful answers in CEPI documentation.

Third, contact CEPI customer support. CEPI staff will assist, but you can speed up the process if you describe your problem clearly.

### **2. What is a UIC? Why is it important?**

Unique Identification Codes (UICs) are distinct, state-assigned, ten-digit codes used to identify a student. At a minimum, public schools in Michigan are required to have UICs for all students. Once a student has been assigned a UIC, school administrators or individuals authorized to act on behalf of schools may submit student data for state reporting needs.

The UIC is important because it links records across multiple school districts and time periods to a single student. Consequently, UICs make it possible to analyze educational outcomes for students as they progress through the school system.

CEPI is the Michigan agency responsible for maintaining student UIC information.

### **3. How do I get UICs for our students?**

Authorized individuals may request UICs for students using the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). There are two options available to MSDS users. First, the Student Search feature accessed from the MSDS navigation menu allows them to search for a single student and to request a UIC if no record of the student is found.

Second, MSDS users can upload a file with multiple student requests for UIC matching (aka *Request for UIC Collection*).

You will need to have a student's personal information ready to submit as part of a request:

- UIC (if already known)
- Last name
- First name
- Middle name (if there is one)
- Suffix (if there is one)
- Date of birth
- Multiple birth order (see #6)
- Gender

#### **4. Why would I need to submit a UIC to get a UIC?**

The answer relates to how your entity's student information system (SIS) works and automates a *Request for UIC Collection*. If you already know UICs for some students, your SIS may automatically populate a *Request for UIC Collection* with all the currently enrolled students' records, including known UICs.

An advantage of submitting a UIC is that it helps the UIC System match students. It becomes a massive advantage for post-secondary institutions because student details can change (e.g., last name), and the provision of a UIC with a request simplifies the matching process and informs CEPI staff who deal with requests sent to resolution (see #8).

The main point: it does no harm submitting a student UIC if you already know it.

#### **5. What documents do I need to see to accurately submit a UIC request for a new student?**

Section 1135 of the Revised School Code ([MCL 380.1135](#)) requires a student to provide a certified copy of the student's birth certificate at first enrollment in a local or intermediate school district. Failing this, the student may provide other reliable proof of the student's identity and age, as determined by the school district, along with an affidavit explaining why the student cannot produce a copy of the birth certificate.

#### **6. What purpose does the Multiple Birth Order field serve?**

You're not required to submit information about Multiple Birth Order (MBO). MBO is what MSDS documentation calls an "optional" field, because it isn't meaningful for single birth students and has a default value of the digit "0". But we would prefer that you submit for all cases where twins (triplets, etc.) of the same gender have the same or a similar first name. Aside from trying to maintain the integrity of MSDS records and the UIC System, accurate MBO information can be helpful.

For example, “Maria” and “Marisa,” both girls with no middle name, same last name, and same date of birth could be unrelated or they might be twins. MBO information, in conjunction with submitting entity code, would suggest the latter.

You would enter MBO information for these students as follows. If “Maria” is the first-born girl, you would enter the digit “1”. Then for “Marisa” the younger twin, you would enter the digit “2”.

## 7. How long does it take to get a UIC?

It depends. MSDS applies a series of matching rules to determine whether the student for whom a UIC has been requested constitutes a new record, or instead whether there is an existing record for the same student. The matching process is complicated because:

- Student details might be incorrectly entered (bad data)
- Student details legitimately change (record modifications)
- Students move between public and private schools, and even across states (migration)

If the student is new, MSDS will generate a new UIC within seconds or minutes. Delays in UIC assignment time are due to the number of other requests sent to MSDS at the same time and the number of students submitted in a *Request for UIC Collection* upload file.

When MSDS finds a potential match for a student, the request is sent for “resolution.” This means a human must make a final decision about whether a UIC record exists or not. CEPI staff will try to respond the same day, but during peak periods you should plan on three business days for a decision.

Please consider the timing of your UIC requests carefully. CEPI gathers student information throughout the calendar year and some of the official collections are large, so many districts may be requesting UICs at the same time. This demand can lead to delays in UIC assignments.

## 8. Resolution? Please explain.

When the UIC System cannot decide whether the submitted request details match an existing student record (i.e., a “potential match”) in MSDS, the request is sent for manual resolution. Manual resolution involves a human who must decide if the UIC System has found a legitimate match (the *existing* UIC will be returned), or whether the request is distinct from any potential matches (a *new* UIC will be returned).

When users click on a student record in their entity’s data staging area, a window will display the student request details alongside details for any potential matches. They can select to “Use This Potential” match, and they will see the match’s UIC back in the staging area. Alternatively, users can “Request new UIC” and submit justification text explaining the need (or not, see #9) for a new UIC. CEPI staff will then use all available information to make the final determination. This decision will

be reported back in the data staging area, along with UIC details for the student in question.

## 9. What information should I provide for resolutions?

Staff at the submitting entities are well placed to provide information that will simplify a resolution decision.

In terms of guidance, we recommend you:

- **Do explain your goal.** You either want a new UIC, or you want to update an existing record with submitted student details (see #14). If you say so, the CEPI staff won't have to guess or try to reach you to clarify the request
- **Do verify a student's personal details using a birth certificate or other acceptable documentation** (see #5). **Then say you have done this.** This isn't redundant information. It helps CEPI staff with resolution because they know you have been diligent, and it increases their confidence in the data submission
- **Do submit complete and accurate information.** Go by official documentation. For instance, you should enter "Theodore" as the student's first name, not "Teddy" because the parent (or even the student) says he prefers it. If there is a middle name, please provide it and don't simply provide an initial. Accurate information ensures the UIC System works effectively
- **Do (please!) provide details that CEPI staff wouldn't know.** For example, report if the student:
  - Is living in Michigan for the first time
  - Has previously been home schooled
  - Attended a nonpublic/private school
  - Is a twin
  - Transferred from another Michigan school district
  - Has changed legal names
- **Don't simply state the obvious, please.** CEPI staff can see submitted and potential match details. To be clear, the following justifications are unhelpful:
  - *"Not the same student."*
  - *"First name and DOB don't match."*
  - *"The potential match isn't even close."*
  - *"New student."*But a submission with either of these explanations would be helpful:
  - *"I'm seeking a new UIC. I have verified the student birth certificate. The student's name is 'David' (not 'Davide' like the potential match)."*
  - *"I need to update the existing record. The potential match was entered incorrectly and the DOB is wrong. I've checked the student birth certificate and the student DOB is 10/03/2012 (not 10/02/2013)."*

- **Do contact the potential match's school district if you need more information.** Then report the information you have discovered. This is a helpful justification:
  - *"I need to update the matched record after seeing legal documents. I did speak to District Z and they confirmed the student has changed her name. This is the same student."*

## 10. Is the request process different for Institutions of Higher Education?

No. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) will still provide the same types of personal core information for UIC matching (see #3). However, if IHE administrators want to upload a file with multiple UIC requests, they will instead submit an *IHE Request for UIC Collection*.

## 11. How do I learn more about UICs?

The best place to learn more about UICs is the [Request for UIC web page](http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,4546,7-113-986_50502_52376---,00.html) ([http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,4546,7-113-986\\_50502\\_52376---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,4546,7-113-986_50502_52376---,00.html)) because it has links to all the current materials relating to UICs.

## 12. What's the difference between UIC linking and splitting student records?

It's very easy to accidentally create a UIC for a student when one already exists. Duplicate UICs cause confusion and, if undetected, make it possible to splinter student histories with some collection records submitted for one UIC, and others submitted for another UIC.

The solution is ***UIC linking***. When it becomes apparent two UICs refer to the same student, you should submit a request within MSDS, along with an explanation, to link the UICs.

Note: you will need to do research prior to submitting a request to link UICs. An important step is to reach out to individuals who created the UICs (quite likely in other districts) to verify the student for one UIC is the same student for another UIC. CEPI staff will then review the request and approve or deny it. MSDS will then update student records accordingly. A search for the student in question will yield a record showing all UICs for the student after the UICs are linked. The student history will display merged collection records.

UICs can also be unlinked. If you discover UICs refer to different students, please contact CEPI customer support. CEPI staff will review the student history and unlink UICs if necessary.

Another related challenge is when one district requests a student UIC and uses a potential match when the submitted student is different. This may lead to two

different districts submitting separate collection records that appear for the one student.

To correct this situation, ***splitting records*** is necessary. This is an administrative activity that involves moving a previous collection record associated with one student UIC, to another student UIC. If you need to request a split, please reach out to CEPI customer support. Sometimes splitting will require the creation of a second UIC first. Unlinking can also result in problematic splits of records. Either way, CEPI staff will work with you to ensure students are uniquely identified and have the correct records associated with them.

### **13. I want to link UICs. Which record should be the primary UIC?**

There is no fixed rule. The general guidance is for the UIC with the most recent and complete student history to be set as the primary UIC. But sometimes the most recent history is not the most complete.

When you submit a request to link UICs, you will need to specify a primary UIC. CEPI staff can override this selection, although the outcome is usually consistent with the request instructions.

### **14. A student's personal core information is wrong. What should I do?**

If you know some of a student's personal core information is incorrect, you should send updated information to CEPI. One way to do this is to upload a *Request for UIC Collection* and include the student details that have changed.

Note: this approach is possible but problematic because:

1. You're relying on the UIC System sending the student request to resolution, and the UIC System returning the correct student record as a potential match. If this doesn't happen, you've likely created a duplicate UIC needlessly.
2. A submitting entity can only update the MSDS master record if the existing record has no listed Primary Education Providing Entity (PEPE), or the submitting entity is the PEPE. Otherwise, the result could be a resolved match, but MSDS will retain the original (and obsolete) student information and discard the changes you tried to submit.

Instead, CEPI encourages you to do one of the following actions:

- A. Submit a Student Record Maintenance with correct details for the student.
- B. Submit the new information as part of the fall, spring or end-of-year (EOY) general collection. After your district certifies and the close out establishes PEPE status, the MSDS master record information will update.



**15. I just generated a new UIC with the wrong information. How do I fix it?**

You should follow the CEPI guidelines detailed above (see #14). If in doubt, please contact CEPI customer support.

**16. If in doubt, create a new UIC. Right?**

Wrong. Accidents do happen, but the generation of duplicate UICs undermines student identification management at CEPI. The entire point of a UIC is to distinguish students. Duplicate UICs confound the UIC System, and they make MSDS users and CEPI staff doubt what record (if any) is valid for a given student.

To be clear, please follow the CEPI guidelines detailed above (see #14).

**17. I created a second UIC for a student by mistake. Can you delete it, please?**

There is no way to authorize a UIC deletion. Once assigned, a UIC exists as a permanent record. If you do create a second (duplicate) UIC, please submit a request in MSDS to link the two student UICs or contact CEPI customer support for help.

**18. I need a UIC for a twin. How do I create one?**

The UIC System struggles to differentiate between twins with similar names. You might submit twin "Maria" (new request) and the UIC System will return a potential match for twin "Marisa" (existing record).

If you try to add the twin using the Student Search feature, MSDS will return the existing record. Instead, if you submit a *Request for UIC Collection*, the request for Maria may be sent to resolution.

We encourage you to submit a *Request for UIC Collection*. If it returns a match (i.e., the existing record), contact CEPI customer support. CEPI staff will be able to work with your request in the MSDS data staging area to generate a new UIC.

**19. What now? Somebody took our student's UIC to report for a collection.**

Please contact CEPI customer support. This is a serious issue that impacts multiple stakeholders, so we ask that you tell us as soon as you find a submission conflict. CEPI staff will work with you to resolve the situation – UIC creation if necessary, then splitting of records.

## **20. Why does the Request for UIC Collection upload process take so long?**

The UIC System works in tandem with MSDS. The system deals with millions of records. Each student request involves matching against the existing records. If dozens of school districts are requesting UICs at the same time, the processing time becomes longer because the system resources are stretched.

You can do two things to help. First, plan well ahead of a MSDS collection submission so your UIC requests don't run up against other districts – in other words, please consider the timing of your requests (see #7).

Second, after you have acquired UICs for the students you submit as part of a *Request for UIC Collection*, delete the *Request for UIC Collection* data in your district's data staging area. Don't worry, you won't delete UIC assignments from MSDS. But if you don't clear your record space, each time you submit a *Request for UIC Collection*, MSDS will take all the students you have previously identified and try to match them again, along with any new students added to the collection.

## **21. I'm a researcher and I would like to study Michigan students. Can I get access to deidentified student data?**

CEPI functions to make available reliable information about school and student performance. Researchers can contribute to this endeavor. If you seek access to student data, you can contact CEPI Support with your enquiry.

Please note that CEPI will thoroughly investigate and vet any application. A primary consideration is adherence to strict legal guidelines about sharing data. Not only will you be asked about the purpose of your research, but you will be expected to explain what safeguards you will implement to protect the privacy of students.

CEPI is a trusted government agency because its staff performs their roles seriously. While CEPI staff don't want to discourage researchers from undertaking studies that may inform Michigan's citizens, it's important to highlight the responsibility we all have to uphold the rights of individuals, educational institutions and other government agencies.

## **22. I work for a law enforcement agency and I believe CEPI has access to student information that would assist in an ongoing criminal investigation. Who should I speak to?**

Please contact CEPI customer support. CEPI staff will work with you to secure a formal release of student information, and they will immediately notify CEPI executive leaders to expedite the process.